

THE EVER-LIVING CHRIST

NO. 2689

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 26, 1900
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 24, 1881

*"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen."
Revelation 1:18*

WE long sometimes, to behold Christ in His glory. Certainly, it is one of our brightest hopes that we shall see Him as He is. Every true believer can say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." But brethren, as we are now constituted, we are quite unfit for the vision of our Master's glory.

It was well that when He was on earth, He veiled himself in the form of man, for when He did uplift the veil a little, as He did on the mountain of transfiguration, the sight, though it was but a glimpse, was too much for Peter, and James, and John. They were overpowered by it, they fell asleep even upon the holy mount, and even when they were awake, they knew not what to say.

And as we now are, if we could be favored with a sight of Christ in His glory, it would be too much for us also. It was too much even for John, and we are far inferior to him, our eyes are not as clear and strong as his eyes were, yet he could not endure that wondrous vision. The grey old saint in Patmos had been familiar with his Master more years than most of us have known Him, he had laid his head upon the Savior's bosom—a privilege accorded to none beside himself, he had stood at the cross, and seen the blood and water flow from that dear heart that loved him so well, and yet, though he was "that disciple whom Jesus loved," when he had a sight of his glorified Master, he fell at His feet as dead.

The full glory of Christ is too much for us to behold while we are here on the earth, so ask not to have it yet, dear friends. By and by, when you are fitted for it, and Christ has prepared a place for you, His prayer shall be fulfilled in your happy experience, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." He might say to each one of you, "Not yet, My child, not yet may you see Me as I Am, your eyes are not yet fit for such a sight as that."

Observe, beloved, how the Savior comforted John when, through the excessive glory of the vision of his Lord, he swooned away and was as one dead. First, He laid His right hand upon him, and that is where your comfort and mine must always come from—from the hand that was crucified for us. There streams from that pierced hand a wondrous power that makes the weakest strong. A touch of it proves how near Christ is to us. We know when He touches us, that He is man as well as God, and the familiar touch, which brings Him so consciously near our spirit, makes us glad and joyous, and we become strong again.

And if the fact of His incarnation—the truth that Christ is flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone—should not suffice to cheer us, then He adds, as He did to John, "Fear not." The Master is saying that to each one of you who believe in Him, but especially to such of you as are very faint and weak, and who feel that you are soon to die. He is drawing near to you, sisters and brothers, who are shortly to lay aside the frail tabernacle of this mortal body. The glintings and gleamings of the glory yet to be revealed overcome you, but He whispers in your ear, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead." All these words are full of good cheer to spirits that faint away with expectation of the coming of the King, and to hearts that are ravished with desire for the company of the Best-beloved.

“Fear not,” says He, and that we also may not fear, let us now look into the things here made known which ought to be a cause of strength and comfort to us. They seem to me to be three, though there are many more, there are three that strike me most. The first is *the identity of Christ*. However glorious He may be, and His very face is as the sun when He shines in His strength, yet He is the same Christ as when He was here on earth, “I am he that liveth, and was dead.” Those words prove to us the identity of Christ.

The next ground of sweet comfort, whenever we think of Christ in His glory, is *the perfection of His work*, which is implied in the expression, “and was dead.” He has nothing to do with death now, as far as He is personally concerned, that is all over. You see that the words are in the past tense, “I am he that liveth, *and was dead*.” And then, thirdly, the great source of heart-cheer to every believer, as he trembles in the presence of his glorified Master, is the fact of *Christ’s eternal existence*, “I am alive for evermore.” He will never again be the dead Christ of Calvary, “I am alive for evermore, Amen.”

I. Let us begin, then, with the first great truth that I mentioned—and I must necessarily speak somewhat hurriedly on each one—THE IDENTITY OF OUR BLESSED MASTER should greatly comfort us when we think of His glory.

Christ in heaven is the same as He was here. A great change has passed over Him, but not a change as to His identity or His nature—and especially not a change as to His heart of love to us, for He is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever”—absolutely the same. He who now makes all heaven bright with His presence is the selfsame Christ who was born at Bethlehem, trod the waves of Galilee’s storm tossed lake, hung upon the cross, was wrapped in the cerements of death, and laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

That same Jesus has risen from the dead, and is now sitting at the right hand of God, reigning over all worlds. I want specially to bring before you this one thought, that while Christ was here, during the forty days after His resurrection, He was manifestly the same Jesus that He had been during His earthly life. We will not suppose, we cannot imagine, that any change has taken place in Him since then. The forty days of His glory on earth were a fair specimen of what He now is, and He was then the selfsame Jesus that the disciples had known before He was crucified.

There were certain points about Him in which He made it quite clear that He was the same, the first was *His tenderness*. He was always meek and lowly, gentle and kind, and He was just the same after He rose from the dead. Mark tells us that, “when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.”

There is a fine touch of tenderness in that mention of the seven devils in connection with Christ’s appearance to Mary Magdalene. She was one who loved Him much, she had been one of the last to watch by the sepulcher, and now she was to be the first to meet her Lord after He had risen from the dead. It was just like Christ to manifest Himself first to her, to find out one of the weakest of His followers, one of those who loved Him most, and one for whom He had already done the most.

Then, it was just like Him to send His angel with this message to the women, “Go your way, tell his disciples”—the very men who had all forsaken Him and fled, the cowards who had deserted Him in His hour of greatest need—“tell his disciples”—and then follows that tender, Christlike touch—“tell his disciples *and Peter*”—poor, willful Peter, who said that he would die rather than deny his Lord, yet he did deny Him with oaths and curses, yet Christ sent him a special personal message, “tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall you see him, as he said unto you.” I am quite sure that this is the same Christ who said to Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”

Then, further on, dear brethren, notice Christ’s tenderness to Thomas. Even after Christ had risen from the grave a whole week, Thomas was still unbelieving. He had said that he would not believe that his Lord had risen unless he could see in His hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into the wound in Christ’s side.

On the second Sabbath, the Master came again to His disciples, and after saying to them, "Peace be unto you," He spoke to Thomas no word of anger, but simply said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." There were, necessarily, some rebukes during that memorable period, for love must rebuke that which is not right, but those rebukes were like the reproof of which David said, "It shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." They were just such rebukes as always come from Jesus, and only from Jesus, so we are sure it was the selfsame man who had both died and risen again.

And if another instance is needed to complete and crown the evidence, look at our Lord when He invited the disciples to eat fish with Him by the lake, and then afterwards said to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Thrice He repeated the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and then He commissioned him to feed His lambs and act as under-shepherd to His sheep.

That was exactly like Christ, there was no counterfeit about such an action as that. He might there and then have said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead," the disciples would have recognized the tones of His voice, the manner of His speech, and the spirit of His rebuke. Everything about it was so tender that it could not have been imitated, and we say at once, as John said to Peter, "It is the Lord." We cry, like Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

A second characteristic which, in connection with other things, proves the identity of Christ is *His energy*. If Christ, after the resurrection had been very slow, dull, heavy, lethargic, we should have said, "This is not He who was eaten up with the zeal of God's house, this is not the Christ who was clad with zeal as with a cloak." But on that day of our Lord's resurrection, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, then to Simon Peter, then toward evening, He joined the two disciples going to Emmaus, and after He had revealed Himself to them, they could scarcely reach Jerusalem before He was there in the midst of the eleven saying, "Peace be unto you."

We have not a complete record of all that transpired during those forty days, but we have sufficient to show us that our Lord was busy, here and there, showing Himself, sometimes to little groups of two or three, and at one time to as many as five hundred brethren at once, and we can see that His never tiring energy was steadily maintained through those days of His glory-life while yet He tabernacled here below.

Another point too, is especially noticeable in the records of those forty days, and that is, *the constant Scripturalness of the blessed Master's talk*. You know that in His day, even the religious people did not quote Scripture as He did. The Rabbis said, "Rabbi Yohannin has said," or "Rabbi Simeon has said," or "Rabbi Levi has said so-and-so and so-and-so." But Christ quoted nothing from the Rabbis.

On the way to Emmaus "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." It was always His custom so to do, and often, He seemed to go out of His way to do or say something "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." He was always careful that by some act or word of His, He might fulfill a prophecy which, perhaps, we never should have understood if He had not fulfilled it.

So, after He had risen from the dead, if He had not been a Bible loving Christ, we might have questioned whether He was the same Christ. I have reminded you what He said to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and when He was back at Jerusalem among the eleven, He said to them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

His constant reference to the Word, His manifest delight in quoting it, the Scripturalness of His whole conversation—all this is clear and convincing evidence that He was the same Christ who all His life, from the temptation in the wilderness to His death on the cross, constantly quoted the Scriptures. There was no other such teacher in His day, who continually drew his instruction from the written Word, He was the one lone man who was mighty in the Scriptures, and who perpetually quoted them in His

discourses, and as He continued to do so after His resurrection, this was another proof of His identity, He was the selfsame Christ, depend upon it.

There was another trait in His character which must not be forgotten, that is *His love for the souls of men*. Does that come out after His resurrection? Ay, it does, not only in the incidents to which I have referred, but also in His declaration “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” I can see a great deal in those three words, “beginning at Jerusalem.”

Depend upon it, they were spoken by the man who wept over Jerusalem, and who cried, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” “Give them one more opportunity of coming to Me,” He says, “preach repentance and remission of sins in My name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

That is the man, I am sure, of whom it is written, “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners to hear him.” The Pharisees and scribes said of Him, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them,” that is why He said to His apostles, “Begin with the greatest sinners first, ‘beginning at Jerusalem.’” I know it is He, it must be the Christ Himself, for ere He died, He prayed for His murderers, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” and having risen from the dead, it was for those very murderers that He gave His commission of grace and mercy.

His care for men, and for the very worst of them, and His love for souls, and for those that were most of all in need of His pity and forgiveness, prove that He was the same Christ who “was moved with compassion on the multitudes, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”

One other thing I may note, for it helps to prove the identity of Christ, that is *His mention of the Spirit*, for in those times, there were none but Christ who preached about the Spirit of God. I greatly fear that there are not very many who do so now. Oh, how the Spirit of God is neglected in many sermons! I heard of one preacher, of whom it was said that people who listened to him did not know whether there was any Holy Ghost, they had not heard of Him for so long that they thought surely He must have ceased to operate.

But our Lord continually mentioned the Spirit. In that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).”

In that blessed chapter, where He tells us about the Comforter whom the Father would send to us in His name, He showed that He was Himself clothed with the Spirit, and He spoke much of the Spirit. Now see how He spoke after He had risen from the dead, could anything be plainer than this, “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high”?

In His last words to His disciples, there is always this reference and deference to the Spirit, this witness to the necessity of His operations, this warning to His followers that they can do nothing without Him, that they cannot preach the Gospel successfully except the Spirit of God be with them. That is the selfsame Christ upon whom the Spirit rested without measure, I am sure it is He, and when He says, “I am he that liveth—and was dead,” all the tokens of the forty days go to prove the identity of the risen Christ with the Christ who died upon the cross.

Let us dwell on that thought for just a minute ere we pass on. Christ in glory is none other than He was here. No man ever loses anything by going to heaven, an ordinary man gains much by going there, so I am sure my Lord is none the worse for entering into His glory, He is none the less tender, none the less zealous, none the less mighty to save, but just as we might have been glad to run to Him when He was here, so may we gladly go to Him now, for He is just the same.

II. Now I must speak very briefly upon the second head, although I might enlarge upon it to almost any extent, for it relates to THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST.

When our Lord used to John the words, “was dead,” and applied them to Himself, He meant that *He had performed the crucial part of the atonement*. The very central point of the atonement was death, there was no way of making atonement for sin except by the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. There must be life to atone for sin, and that life sacrificed, and therefore, Christ “was dead.” It was no dream, no delusion, no sleep, no swoon, no coma, He “was dead.” Though it was not possible for our blessed and glorious Savior to be held by the bands of death, yet He “was dead.”

This meant, further, that *Christ’s work was ended, and done with*. There are some people who talk about presenting the perpetual sacrifice of the mass. There is perhaps, no grosser blasphemy under heaven than the idea that we can offer up the body and blood of Christ again. “Once for all” Jesus died, but He is not a dead Christ now. Pictures of Christ dead, and crucifixes, and all things of that sort, may to some extent represent what He was, but they do not represent what He is.

I should not care to have hanging up in my house, the picture of a dead friend, representing him as he looked when he was dead, especially if he had been raised to life again. I would rather wait for his portrait till I could get one of him alive, for the picture of a dead man is not the man’s likeness at all. I saw in a friend’s house the other day, the likeness of a minister, and I said, “Oh, dear, how ghastly he looks!” The gentleman replied, “I am told that the photograph was taken after he was dead.” “Well then,” I said, “put it away at once, pray put it away. That is not the likeness of the man at all, for the man was gone before it was taken.”

So, dear friends, do not feel any kind of reverence for representations of the dead Christ, because He is not dead, and we ought not to think of Him as dead. I have seen, and some of you must also have seen, in Roman Catholic countries, figures of the Savior on the cross, till you have grown sick of the sight, and you have said, “If there is anything that could drive me away from being a Christian, it is these perfectly hideous caricatures of Christ that some people stick up at every corner of the road.”

Christ is not dead. He “was dead.” It is in the past tense, never forget that, but He is not dead now. “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said,” and our trust is not in a dead Christ, but in the ever-living Christ who is still able “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Recollect also, dear friends, that in the enterprise upon which our Lord’s heart was set—the enterprise of saving men—the *love which led Him to die is living love*. He has proved, once for all, and beyond all doubt, how much He loves His people, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” He has done that, and therefore He has proved His love to guilty men in a way that is perfectly indisputable, and—

*“Now though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.”*

And remember next, that *the purpose of Christ in dying will certainly be accomplished*, now that He has laid down His life for His people, and taken it up again. I am not one of those who think that the result of Christ’s death ever hung in jeopardy for a single moment. I believe that all He intended to do by His death will be done, and that there is not one soul, for whom He stood as Substitute, that shall ever be lost. He has paid the debt for all His elect, and they shall never be charged with their debts again, they are gone, and gone forever.

If the Son of God has actually laid down His life to achieve a certain purpose, I cannot suppose that He will be prevented from achieving it. I can imagine myself living and dying for a certain end, and yet being foiled, for I am but a man, but I am not capable of such blasphemy as would be involved in believing that the Son of God could ever be born and live for a certain set purpose, and die to carry out

that purpose, and yet not accomplish it. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” He “was dead,” and He has therefore put forth all His strength for the accomplishment of the end He had in view, and that end will certainly be achieved.

And recollect too, that *the merit of His death abides*. He “was dead,” but all the merit of that death is just as efficacious today as though He had only died today. Imagine for a moment that this was the morning of Christ’s resurrection; that I stood here to tell you that I had gone with Mary Magdalene, and seen His empty tomb, and that He had spoken to me as He did to her. With what freshness and power would I talk to you about those dear wounds of His, and about the meaning of His death, and the sacrifice which He had offered.

Well now, although more than eighteen hundred years have passed since His resurrection, it is just as fresh to God, and just as acceptable to God as ever it was. Still does He approve of the atoning sacrifice of the Well-beloved, and the merit of it comes up perpetually before Him like the odor of sweet incense.

This is a glad, a joyous theme, over which I would fain linger—to think that Christ’s work is all done, all finished, all complete, there is nothing more needing to be done for His people’s redemption, as He Himself said, ere He gave up the ghost, “It is finished.” That expression “was dead” comes to me like the sound of a peal of bells tolling the death of death, and ringing in the jubilee of all who believe in Jesus. He “was dead,” but He is dead no longer, He lives now, and He is “alive for evermore.”

III. With that third word of comfort I am going to conclude. THE ETERNAL EXISTENCE OF CHRIST should always comfort us whenever we think of His glory. He that was dead is “alive for evermore.”

Here then, you warriors of the cross, is *unique leadership*. Never did men before have such a leader as this one, who has proved His ardor for the accomplishment of His purpose by dying to achieve it, and who now lives to see that purpose fully accomplished. When Mohammed was alive—false prophet though he was—he inspired his followers with extraordinary enthusiasm when he snatched up a handful of dust from the road, and flung it in the faces of his adversaries, crying, as he did so, “Let them be blinded.” His followers believed that a miracle would really be wrought, and they therefore rushed upon their enemies, and swept them away like chaff before the whirlwind.

Yet now that Mohammed is dead and gone, his religion wanes, and must in time expire, but our Master is not dead, our Leader is alive. He still rides at the head of the army of the cross, and calls us to battle for truth and right. The ungodly hear Him not, but as many as believe in Him still hear His clear voice ringing out the command, “Onward, hosts of God! Forward to the fight! ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,’ until I come.”

We take comfort from the fact that we are led by the living Christ. When the Cid, Rodrigo Diaz, had been slain in battle, those who had been accustomed to dread his mighty sword did not for a time know that he was dead. His followers mounted the dead Cid on horseback, and the very sight of him, though it was only his corpse that they saw, made his adversaries fly before him. We set no dead Christ in the forefront of our army, it is the living Christ who marches before us, and therefore we are confident of victory, for never was host so led as by Him who can say, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.”

Next, here is *a singular guarantee*. He, who was dead, is now alive, then brethren, He will carry on His work. If when He died, He had never risen again, but had left His cause in our puny hands, it would soon have failed. But He has risen, and “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.” His kingdom shall extend to the utmost bounds of the earth, “they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.” Be you sure of this, beloved, that there is a guarantee of victory in the fact that Christ is still alive.

In these dreary times in which we live, men tell us that Christianity is a failure, that the Gospel is a delusion, and I do not know what is not going to happen. Yes, yes, but there is one very important thing which they omit to mention. He lives, *He lives*, HE LIVES, who can never be crucified again. The Lord has set Him as King upon His holy hill of Zion, and though “the kings of the earth set themselves, and

the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision,” for the Lord reigns, and He shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah.

In addition to this unique leadership, and this singular guarantee of success, we have also here *special encouragement to sinners*. I verily believe that, if my Master were here tonight in bodily presence, there are some of you who have been seeking Him, who would come and fall at His feet, ay, you would be only too glad if you might wash His feet with your tears, and wipe them with the hairs of your head.

Well, He is living, and He is here, though you cannot see Him or touch Him, and you may come to Him. You have not to travel any distance with weary feet in order to get to Him, your minds can get to Him at once. Forget your eyes awhile, they are poor dim things that hinder true sight. That may seem to be a strange description of our eyes, but it is true, and when we have got rid of them, we shall see much better than we do now.

But oh! for once, believe without seeing, believe that Jesus Christ is near you, and ask Him to save you. Come to Him, and by faith touch the hem of His garment just as if He were here corporeally. Cry to Him, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me,” for He will hear you, and grant your request. Say, “Lord, that I might receive my sight,” and He will spiritually open your eyes now even as, in the days of His flesh, He literally opened the eyes of blind men.

You may well come to Him, for He is just the same Jesus as He used to be when He said, “Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He lives, *He lives*, HE LIVES, therefore, go to your homes and find Him there, go to your bedrooms and tell Him that you need Him, cast yourselves down before Him in humble penitence and true faith, and He will save you, He will bless you, because He still lives to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him.

Now I close by noticing that there is something in this text which has a *solemn warning* in it, for Christ lives, and as He lives, woe be to those who persecute His people! Woe be to those who make a jest of Him, or trifle with His truth, neglect His Gospel, and put off seeking their own salvation until tomorrow!

O my dear hearers, if Christ were dead, we ought to respect His memory, but since He lives, remember that He takes cognizance of every insult to His cause, and though He is ever ready to forgive, yet, if your ears refuse the invitations of His grace, if you hold out against His warnings and entreaties, He will surely come again, and when He comes, there will be upon that face of love something which you will dread more than all the lightnings and thunders of the last tremendous day.

What, think you, will be the most dreadful thing in the day of judgment? The fairest sight that e’er was seen by mortal men—the face that causes the holy angels to sing, and that makes heaven for the saints—the face of Christ—love and justice, gentleness and truth, Godhead and manhood blended in that matchless face, and while His saints clap their hands with jubilant exultation at the sight of Him, the most awful thing in all the world to the ungodly will be that face, for as they look into it, and see the lines of suffering, and of suffering despised—and see the marks of love, and of love rejected—of majesty, and of majesty that has been insulted—as they look there, they will cry to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

O sirs, that must be a dreadful thing which turns the best thing in heaven into an object of the utmost terror! So, give up that sin of yours, I pray you. Give up that unbelief. Give up that self-righteousness. Give up everything that will, as it were, curdle the very love of Christ till even His great love shall turn to jealousy, for fiercer than the lion with his prey is love when once it is transformed into wrath.

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,” for their confidence is in Him who still says, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” God bless you, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—307, 334, 326

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

HEBREWS 5

Verse 1. *For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:*

Notice that the high priests were taken from among men, not from among angels. Hence, our Lord Jesus Christ “took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” The Jewish high priests were ordained for men, they acted on behalf of men, and they stood in the place of men.

So the Lord Jesus Christ stood in the room, place, and stead of His people, that He might offer to God for them two things—gifts—that is, such offerings as the Jew made when he presented the fine flour, and oil, and other bloodless oblations which were only intended for thanksgiving. Christ offered thanksgiving unto His Father, and that offering was a sweet savor unto God. But beside those gifts, the priests offered sacrifices, and our Lord Jesus Christ did the same, for He was made a sin offering for us, though He Himself knew no sin.

2. *Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;*

The marginal reading is, “Who can reasonably bear with the ignorant”—that is, one who does not lose his temper even when they are very slow to learn what he teaches them. Having taught them nineteen times, and finding that they do not understand or remember the lesson, he is ready to teach them the twentieth time, He is one who will give them line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, because he has compassion on the ignorant.

Then there were others who tried the high priest far more even than the ignorant did, they were those who erred from the right path, those who went out of the way, and who continued to do so even after many warnings and much earnest exhortation. The true priest must have patience with people of this sort.

2. *For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.*

So all the high priests under the law were. They had to confess their own ignorance, they had to admit their own errors and wanderings, and therefore they could the more readily have patience with others. Our Lord Jesus Christ had neither ignorance nor sin of His own, but He has become so completely one with His people, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that He can have compassion upon us, ignorant and out of the way as we may be.

Are you distressed, my brethren and sisters, because you feel your own ignorance? Do you mourn because you have gone astray? You have to come to no angry Christ, you have to approach One who will be very gentle toward you. Come boldly to Him then, confess your folly, and expect the pardon that He is waiting to bestow.

3. *And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.*

We know that, being compassed with infirmity and imperfection, the high priests first offered sacrifices on their own account, and then afterwards offered them on behalf of the people. Christ, being pure and holy, needed no sacrifice for Himself, but He did offer a complete, and acceptable, and sufficient sacrifice for us.

4. *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*

Men could not constitute themselves high priests, for the appointment was made by God alone.

5-6. *So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

Beloved, there is rich comfort for all believers in the fact that Christ is God's appointed and accepted High Priest. God ordained Him to do what He has done, and is doing, and will do, and therefore it is impossible but that God should accept Him and all His work.

7-8. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Just as the earthly high priests offered sacrifices for themselves, so Christ, though He needed not to offer sacrifice for Himself, did need to pray for Himself. You know, beloved, how He gave Himself unto prayer upon the cold mountains at midnight, and how Gethsemane's garden witnessed the bloody sweat falling in clots to the ground.

"Though he were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without suffering. We may escape the rod if we are not of the family of God, but the true-born child must not, and would not if he might, avoid that chastisement of which all such are partakers.

9. And being made perfect,—

That is, perfect in His obedience, perfect as a sacrifice, perfect as the Mediator and Substitute for His people—

9. He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Brethren, what a grand expression that is, "eternal salvation"! You know that there are some who preach a temporary salvation, they say that you may be in Christ today and out of Christ tomorrow, that you may be saved by grace at one hour, but damned by sin the next. Ah! but the Bible says no such thing. This may be the Gospel according to Arminius, but it is not the Gospel according to John, nor according to Paul, nor according to our Lord Jesus Christ. That Gospel is—

***"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever;
Nothing from His love can sever."***

Christ became the Author of "eternal salvation," and the word "eternal" must mean without end, so that, if we once receive the salvation which Christ has wrought out, we are saved in time, and shall be saved throughout all eternity. Christ is the Author of this eternal salvation, not our good works, though our faith and our works become the evidences of our having received this eternal salvation.

10. Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Then the apostle appeared to be going on to enlarge upon the Melchisedec priesthood, but he stopped. Perhaps he recollected what his Master said to His disciples on one occasion, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now." In a similar fashion Paul writes:—

11-14. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.